



## 2 Corinthians 8v1-9

This week at Magdalen Road church we reached a new section in Paul's letter to Corinth. He's moved on from discussions of the 'super-apostles' (for now) and is talking to them about giving.

We begin by considering that money is the thorny issue for us in the West as believers. We can find it very easy to put our trust and our hope in things that are seen rather than unseen. Being distinct and different when it comes to money and materialism can be very hard to do.

In the section Paul give them three different motivations to give. There is a specific situation and context that Paul is writing into, but the principles themselves are universal and applicable to us.

### v1-4 Giving out of poverty

The situation seems to be that Paul is gathering a collection for the church in Jerusalem which is probably undergoing famine (Romans 15). It seems likely that the Corinthians had previously pledged to give and here Paul is making sure they follow through on that!

The example of the Macedonians is a challenging one, for they themselves were not well off and so it is out of their poverty that we see their generosity. Paul is using them as an example for the Corinthians (who consider themselves to be very gifted and superior). An equivalent for today might be for the Western Church to consider churches elsewhere who are experiencing persecution or famine - yet despite their circumstances are incredibly generous.

A particular challenge is that they gave more than they were able. Clearly this takes some pastoral wisdom - it's convicting for us though as we often (usually?) only give out of our

excess at the *end* of the month rather than giving first and shaping our budget around that. The Macedonians are exemplary in their generosity despite their circumstances.

### v5-7 Giving out of discipleship

The *reason* the Macedonians are able to give so generously is that first of all (and fundamentally) they gave themselves. Their generosity flows from their discipleship. Often it takes time for our relationship with money to catch up with our sanctification and discipleship!

In a sense this is simply a daily following Jesus with all that we are. Even our money.

### v8-9 Giving out of the cross

We noted that foundationally and fundamentally, generosity for the believer comes from a grasp of how generous God has been with us. As Jesus, the 'richest man' in all the universe, becomes poor for us, so we see God's extravagance, and so we are made rich as we receive God's blessings. Indeed we get God himself! As we grasp more of this generosity so in turn we become generous. God's grace for us is never meant to be locked away but rather passed on to others.

Some questions to get you started:

- Why do you think our hearts can be so taken in by money and possessions?
- Do you think you suffer from affluenza? Would you say that you are greedy? Why or why not?
- What different motivations here does Paul use to encourage the Corinthians to give generously?
- How does this challenge us in our church culture?
- Do you find it easy to be generous? Why or why not?

In reading 'Caring for One Another' we have been setting out to do the "work of ministry", bearing with one another in love, with all humility in gentleness. We do this in small steps, being a little more alert in everyday conversations, a little more confident that the Lord uses ordinary people.

How does this help us in thinking about money and greed?